

Message Text

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EB-11 FEA-02 FPC-01 H-03 INT-08 L-03 NSC-10 OMB-01

PM-07 SCI-06 SS-20 STR-08 TRSE-00 OIC-04 IO-14 ACDA-19

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INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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TAGS: ENRG, BE

SUBJECT: ENERGY: BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ON WASHINGTON ENERGY
CONFERENCE

REF: BRUSSELS 973

1. SUMMARY: FONMIN VAN ELSLANDE, ANALYZING WASHINGTON

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ENERGY CONFERENCE FOR BELGIAN PRESS ON FEBRUARY 14, CHARACTER-

IZED IT AS CONSTRUCTIVE MEETING. EC COUNTRIES MADE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION AND CONFERENCE DECISIONS ARE IN CONFORMITY WITH EC MANDATE. FRENCH OPPOSITION TO SPECIFIC POINTS WAS REALLY TO FORM NOT SUBSTANCE, BUT MORE IMPORTANT REFLECTED FRENCH INTERPRETATION OF USG'S "TRUE OBJECTIVE" WHICH WAS, IN FRENCH EYES, TO ASSURE AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL HEGEMONY OVER OTHER INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES INCLUDING THE EC. VAN ELSLANDE BITINGLY REJECTED FRENCH VIEW AND CASTIGATED FRENCH FOR REFUSAL TO MAKE "REASONABLE COMPROMISES," WHICH REFUSAL CONSTITUTED REAL THREAT TO EUROPEAN UNITY. END SUMMARY.

2. BELGIAN FONMIN VAN ELSLANDE HELD PRESS CONFERENCE IN BRUSSELS ON FEBRUARY 14 AT WHICH HE RELEASED WRITTEN STATEMENT ON WASHINGTON ENERGY CONFERENCE. STATEMENT IS FIRM DECLARATION OF VAN ELSLANDE'S VIEWS AND MINCES VERY FEW WORDS AS TO GOB VIEW OF FRENCH BEHAVIOR AT CONFERENCE; FOR INSTANCE, CALLING "OBSTINATE REFUSAL TO MAKE REASONABLE COMPROMISES" TRUE THREAT TO EUROPEAN UNITY. FOLLOWING ARE BASIC POINTS CONTAINED IN VAN ELSLANDE'S STATEMENT:

3. AFTER A CONFERENCE AS IMPORTANT AS THAT WHICH TOOK PLACE IN WASHINGTON, IT IS NECESSARY TO CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENED IN ORDER THAT PUBLIC OPINION BE PROPERLY INFORMED. IN THE DELICATE SITUATION IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES, IT IS INDISPENSABLE THAT SUCH ANALYSIS BE SOBER AND RIGOROUS.

A. ALL PARTICIPANTS AT CONFERENCE AGREED ON NECESSITY OF "PLAN OF ACTION" TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS REQUIRING "CONSTRUCTIVE AND GLOBAL" SOLUTIONS, SUCH SOLUTIONS ALSO REQUIRING CONSULTATION WITH PRODUCING COUNTRIES AND OTHER CONSUMERS IN CONFORMITY WITH COMMUNITY MANDATE.

B. PARAGRAPH 9 OF CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE OUTLINING AREAS OF ACTION FOR ENERGY PROGRAM CORRESPONDS WITH OBJECTIVES FIXED BY EC. FRENCH RESERVATION ON THIS PARAGRAPH IS TO FORM NOT SUBSTANCE.

C. CONFERENCE AGREED ON NEED TO STIMULATE VIGOROUS ACTIVITY ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF ENERGY PROBLEM IN IMF, IBRD, OECD, "IN ACCORD WITH COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES." FRENCH RESERVATION IS AGAIN TO FORM NOT SUBSTANCE, AS FRANCE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE COMPETENCE OF WASHINGTON CONFERENCE TO DEAL WITH THESE QUESTIONS.

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D. CONFERENCE RECOGNITION THAT ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL PETROLEUM COMPANIES IN NEW INTERNATIONAL SITUATION IS TO BE EXAMINED IN DETAIL SHOWS THAT "CONFERENCE CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AS HAVING FOR OBJECTIVE THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PRIVILEGED SITUATION OF THE GREAT OIL COMPANIES."

EC. COMMUNITY INSISTED ON RIGHT TO FORMULATE OWN ENERGY POLICY BUT EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN OTHER COMPETENT INSTITUTIONS. "MORE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ARRANGEMENTS IMPROVE,

LESS BILATERAL ACCORDS WILL BE NEEDED., WASHINGTON CONFERENCE MAKES IT EVEN MORE NECESSARY TO CREATE AN EC ENERGY POLICY. PARAGRAPH 7 OF COMMUNIQUE EMPHASIZES NECESSITY OF HARMONIZING INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES' INTERESTS INTO A LARGER GLOBAL SYSTEM.

F. SOLUTIONS TO ENERGY PROBLEMS WILL RESULT ONLY FROM INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION; PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS. THIS WAS CONCLUSION OF CONFERENCE AND OBJECTIVE OF COMMUNITY.

4. THESE STATEMENTS PROVE CONFERENCE RESULTS MATCHED EC OBJECTIVES AND DEMONSTRATE ROLE EC MEMBERS PLAYED IN MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. FRENCH OPPOSITION WAS NOT TO SPECIFIC AMERICAN PROPOSALS BUT TO WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE "REAL INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS" OF USG: "TO ASSURE AN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL HEGEMONY OVER THE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES." "BEING IN THE HABIT OF ONLY DEALING WITH FACTS, I CANNOT AGREE WITH THE FRENCH EVALUATION." THE USG HAS PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL ACTION IN ALL RELEVANT FIELDS WHICH MUST INVOLVE ALL PRODUCING COUNTRIES AS WELL AS THE VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF CONSUMERS.

5. MAJOR CONFERENCE DECISION (CREATION OF COORDINATING GROUP AND ITS INSTRUCTIONS) FULLY CONFORMS WITH THE COMMUNITY MANDATE BY CREATING A "LIAISON ORGAN"; NOT A PERMANENT INSTITUTION.

6. DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN FRENCH AND REST OF COMMUNITY RESULTED FROM ATTEMPT TO IMPLEMENT EC MANDATE IN RESPECT TO CONSULTATION WITH OTHER CONSUMING COUNTRIES. FRANCE WANTED TO SEND THIS QUESTION TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF OECD. OTHER EC COUNTRIES, INCLUDING BELGIUM, PROPOSED COMPROMISE INVOLVING CREATION OF STUDY GROUPS TO PREPARE A SECOND CONFERENCE WITH PRODUCING COUNTRIES. STUDY GROUPS' PROPOSALS WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO OECD

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HIGH-LEVEL PETROLEUM GROUP. FRANCE REFUSED TO ACCEPT THIS PROPOSITION. THE SPLIT BECAME INEVITABLE AS "NO AGREEMENT AMONG THE NINE IS POSSIBLE WHEN ITS CONTENT DIFFERS TOO MUCH FROM WHAT THE VAST MAJORITY DESIRE. WHEN THE ADOPTION BY THE COMMUNITY OF A POSITION BASED ON THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR WILL RESULT IN WRONG DECISIONS, IT SHOULD NOT BE DONE. THIS IS NOT TO SHOW A LACK OF COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY. WHAT THREATENS THAT SOLIDARITY IS THE OBSTINATE REFUSAL TO AGREE TO MAKE REASONABLE COMPROMISES.

7. THE DIFFICULTIES PERCEIVED AT THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE WILL NOT ALTER THE GOAL OF ONGOING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONS AND TO DEFINE THE NEW RELATIONS BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE US, BUT OBVIOUSLY "THE TENSIONS OF THE PAST DAYS WILL LEAVE THEIR TRACES." BELGIUM REMAINS DEVOTED TO THESE GOALS

AND IS WILLING TO TACKLE THE FUNDAMENTAL
POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH RENDER EUROPEAN UNITY FRAGILE.

8. COMMENT: BELGIAN PRESS CONTINUES TO REFLECT SIMILAR ATTITUDES, WITH

CRITICISM
OF FRENCH ROLE APPEARING ACROSS POLITICAL AND LINGUISTIC SPECTRUM.
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